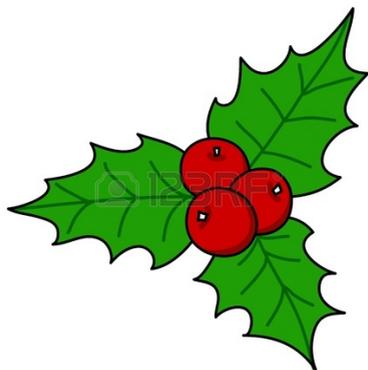


ASHBURY
COMPTON LONGCOT
FERNHAM

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2016



“The holly and the ivy.....”



when they are both full grown.....”

Be a child this Christmas

I recently discovered the significance of the carol The Twelve Days of Christmas. We all know that the twelve days of Christmas are the days from Christmas day to Epiphany but what on earth is it actually all about? Well I think the answer is mathematical. If you add up the total number of gifts given in the carol, guess how many there are?

Well the answer is 364. I wonder whether the author of this carol had this in mind, that on 364 days of the year the gifts, no matter how many, are only ordinary. It's the 365th gift which really makes the difference in people's lives and that is the birth of Jesus Christ our saviour. Lewis Carroll [Charles Ludwig Dodgson] the author of Alice in Wonderland used mathematics in his book, much of it adding up to 42, which was his favourite number. Hardly surprising for an Oxford Don in Mathematics.

The thoughts I wish to share this Christmas come from this reading from Matthew chapter 18, verses 1-5

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

The question I wish to pose is; is Christmas just for children?

In order to answer this, we need to have a look at a so call traditional Christmas.

Come 4 o'clock on Christmas day when all the presents have been opened, batteries have run down, Dad's asleep on the sofa, and there's more washing up in the sink than at the Savoy and to top it all, the wizard of OZ is on again; Christmas can seem a bit of an anti-climax. Yes, indeed if you look at Christmas like that it can seem a bit like letting air out of a balloon. This great build up for a whole month or two seems over in the blink of an eye. Then you wonder why did it take a month or more to prepare for this as you slip into the Boxing Day blues hoping New Year's Eve will hurry up and come.

Hopefully though, as Christians it is not an anti-climax. Christmas has only just begun; this great feast goes on right through to the New Year and then Epiphany when we celebrate the arrival of the three kings. If you have Spanish relatives like me, you will know that the children in Spain don't get their presents until the 6th January and it is the three kings who bring them.

Sometimes though, at Christmas we forget to open that 365th present. You know what it's like, once wrapping paper is all over the floor that one present with no label gets left tucked in a corner until you take the tree down. Then you wonder who was it for or where did it come from-it's easily done.

The key to really understanding Christmas and for that matter the Christian faith lies not in weighty books of theology or great spiritual writings but in the eyes of children. At the annual crib service one can see the wonder and joy of Christmas written over the face of every child. Children are able to grasp the wonder and magic in things that we as adults have so often lost. Harry Potter is a case in point, its success is not because it's witches and goblins but because it looks beyond every day and the mundane. Other stories have done similar things, Alice in Wonderland, Star Wars, The Wizard of OZ or even Mary Poppins, which I'm sure will be on. It would seem that children in their innocence are able to tap into that otherness that which makes us spiritual beings, the part of us which is God given which is not held by the bounds of time and space.

When Jesus sat the child on his knee he was not telling us to behave like children, for those of us who are parents will know that at times children can be far from angelic. He was I believe telling us to feel like children to see and behold the wonder of God which is all around us. This does not mean living life with rose-colored specs, evil will always be there, something even children comprehend. But to truly rejoice in all that is good in the world be it a chocolate wrapped in shiny coloured paper or watching the vapour in one's breath on a cold morning. Emmanuel GOD WITH US!

Blessings

Canon Richard

For Shrivenham & Ashbury Benefice Christmas Services this month, see Benefice News pages 8-10

Ashbury News

Ashbury Evangelical Free Church

Sunday 4 th Dec	10.15am	Communion	
Wednesday 7 th	2.15pm	Tea and chat	
Sunday 11 th	10.15am	Communion	
Sunday 18 th	11am	Joint service & Communion	with St Mary's at the Free Church
Sunday 25 th	No	Service	

Tea and Chat, all welcome, free.



Margaret Gill. It is with sadness we have to report the death on 19th November of Margaret Gill, in Cornwall, where she had recently moved to live with her son and his family.

Suzanne Bunce

The Ashbury prayer cycle for December will be 4th College Farm Lane, 11th High Street 18th Idstone Road, 25th Idstone.

Christmas Choir: if you would like to join the scratch choir to sing at the Carol Service at St Mary's Ashbury on **Saturday December 17th at 5pm** please contact James Reade 710208

The Ashbury Hare Pins (knitting group) would like to say a big **thank you** to all who purchased a knitted poppy from the village shop. The handmade poppies raised an amazing **£200 for the Royal British Legion** which we were also able to gift aid, adding an extra 25% to our donation. Thank you to all the knitters for dedicating so much time and their own resources to such a worthy cause. The Hare Pins meet every **Wednesday evening** in the Jam Jar Tearoom located in the village shop from **6-7pm**. It's £3 for drinks and cake. New members are very welcome even if you just want to have a go!

The Parish of **ASHBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

What would you like the parish of Ashbury to look like five, fifteen, or even fifty years from now? That is the question that all of us who enjoy the unique charms of Ashbury, Kingstone Winslow and Idstone today need to think about right now. How these historic settlements will look to future generations will be our legacy, and your contribution to this process is essential.

We would encourage you to complete the short questionnaire you will already have received and return it to us. Alternatively why not come along to the Ashbury Market on 20th Nov., the Church Bazaar on 26th Nov, or the School Fayre on 1st December, where we will be on hand to provide more information & answer any questions you may have.

YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD YOUR PLAN

From the Ashbury Village Show Committee

July seems like a long time ago during these November days, but the Committee has had some very positive feedback on the Open Gardens and has been inspired to put on another "summer" event next year (2018), but perhaps with a different theme. Also, due to popular demand, to have a "follow up" Gardener's Question Time in April this year (2017), so watch this space.

However, we do need a few more volunteers both to join the Committee and to support us from the sidelines so, if you would like to be involved or have any suggestions or questions please give either Nigel Jefferys 01793 710526 (Chair) or Rev. Norma Fergusson 01793 710055 (Secretary) a call. New people with fresh ideas will keep us "up with the times." Nigel

Saturday 7 January, 4-7 pm - New Year Village Party, Ashbury Village Hall.

Tea, games and fun for all ages. Free entry, but please bring a plate of food. Soft drinks will be provided. Sponsored by the Village Hall and St Mary's Church.

Post Office at the pub. Avoid the queues and the parking! Matthew now brings a large selection of greetings cards and packing materials/envelopes etc. Definitely worth a visit: **9.30—11.30 Wednesday and Friday** each week.

Ashbury School Christmas Fayre - Thursday 1st December - 5pm to 7pm Come and join us for a fabulous evening of Christmas cheer, Carols, Mulled Wine, Mince Pies, Santa's Grotto and Christmas Raffle hampers. There will be many beautiful stalls with gorgeous original goodies for all your Christmas shopping under one warm and welcoming roof!

Prize Bingo - Sunday 4th December - 2pm. In aid of Ashbury Pre-School (registered charity 1156122) Doors Open 2pm. Eyes down at 2.30pm. Tickets £7.50 in advance from Ashbury Shop or £8 on the door. Six games, Refreshments and Raffle included in price. 18 chances to win with a final round Big Cash Prize. Numbers limited so buy your ticket soon!

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the Halloween Bingo on Saturday 29th October to raise funds for Ashbury Pre-School. We raised a fantastic £292! Please come and join us for our Christmas event on Sunday 4th December.

Longcot and Fernham News

Longcot Churches working together -Chapel News

SUN. 11th 3pm Revd. Keith Osborne will be leading our Advent Carol Service to which everyone is welcome. Tea and mince pies will be served after the service.

FRI. 16th 3pm -T-TIME FELLOWSHIP- Afternoon tea (with a Christmas theme) will be available from 3 –4-30pm. Everyone is welcome and there will be no charge but if you'd like to make a donation the money will go to one of the charities that we have supported over the years at our Coffee Mornings. Everyone is welcome and if transport would help or for more information then please ring **Stella on 782584**.

HUGE THANKS – to all who joined us at the last T-time Fellowship and contributed to the £38.75 which has gone to Arthritis Care.

Longcot Welcomes Wessex Male Voice Choir

Longcot has an inspiring track-record for punching well above its weight when it comes to fund-raising for St Mary's. 2016 is the 800th anniversary of this ancient Norman church, and 2016 will end with a spectacular Christmas Concert featuring the fifty members of the award-winning Wessex Male Voice Choir on Friday 16th December. The doors will open at 6:30pm and the concert will start at 7:00pm sharp ending at 8:30 pm.

The concert, like many events in Longcot, was the brain-child of Dr John Forster Sadly, Dr John passed away in late August, but one of his last requests was that the church roof will be well and truly raised on 16th December. Always ready to crack a joke, he suggested that Adult tickets bought before 8:00 am on December 1st be sold for just £8.00, the numbers

echoing the 800th anniversary. After that, tickets will become a still-affordable £10.00. Junior tickets for under 18s will cost £5.00. As well as traditional seasonal music including a couple of carols, the concert will be filled with songs from musical theatre to present day pop, spirituals and folk as well as traditional favourites for male choir. Their Chamber Choir will also be performing some wonderful classical pieces. The 50 member Wessex Male Choir, founded in 2001, is in great demand across Europe, winning numerous awards including, this year, the coveted Gold Cup at the Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts. Everyone can expect a thrilling evening that will not only welcome in Christmas, but act as a great reminder of the kindness and community support of Dr John Forster.

Longcot's Christmas Concert takes place on Friday 16th December 2016. Doors open at 6.30pm. The concert starts at 7.00pm prompt and ends at 8.30pm with a 20-minute interval. There will be a licensed bar. More event information and tickets are available online at www.longcotocktaves.eventbrite.co.uk.

Benefice News

Christmas Services



The **Ashbury Carol Service** will be on **Saturday 17 December at 5pm** in St Mary's Church. Please join us after the service for a glass of wine

Services in Longcot, Fernham and Compton Churches will be on Sunday 18 December at 4pm (Fernham) and 6pm (Longcot and Compton)

Christmas concerts by the Faringdon Singers

This ever popular group of local singers are offering two Christmas concerts: in St Faith's Shellingford on Saturday 10 December at 7.30 pm and on 11 December in the Church of the Blessed Hugh, Faringdon, at 3pm. The programme includes Extracts from Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio'; Elgar's The Snow; John Ridgeway's Tomorrow shall be my dancing day (premier – composed especially for the Faringdon Singers); carols for choir and audience; instrumental solos and readings.

Prayer and Breakfast groups

There will be a men's breakfast as usual on the first Saturday of December in Ashbury village hall but the breakfast bible study on the last Saturday of the month will be taking a break until the end of January.

A Christmas Blessing

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child
be yours this Christmas and always

**Please join us at any of our services for
Advent, Christmas and the New Year
there are a variety of times and service styles to choose from**

Sunday 27 November: The first Sunday of Advent

9.30 St Mary's, Longcot Family Communion

11.00 St Mary's, Ashbury Holy Communion

18.00 St John's, Fernham Evening Prayer

No service at Compton Beauchamp this morning

Sunday 4 December: The second Sunday of Advent

9.00 St Swithun's, Compton Beauchamp B.C.P Communion Service
9.00 St John's, Fernham B.C.P. Communion Service
11.00 St Mary's Ashbury Reflective service for Advent
15.00 Longcot Chapel Advent Carol Service

Sunday 11 December: The third Sunday of Advent

9.30 St Mary's, Longcot Holy Communion
9.30 St John's, Fernham Morning Worship
11.00 St Mary's, Ashbury Holy Communion
No service at Compton Beauchamp this morning

Saturday 17 December

17.00 St Mary's Ashbury Carol Service, followed by refreshments

Sunday 18 December: The fourth Sunday of Advent

11.00 Ashbury Free Church Communion (shared)
16.00 St John's Fernham Carol Service
18.00 St Mary's, Longcot Carol Service
18.00 St Swithun's, Compton Beauchamp Carol Service Mulled wine and mince pies to follow.

Saturday 24 December: Christmas Eve

16.00 St Mary's, Ashbury Crib service
23.30 St Mary's, Longcot Holy Communion
23.30 St Swithun's, Compton Beauchamp Midnight Mass

Sunday 25 December: Christmas Day

9.00 St John's, Fernham Family Communion
9.30 St Mary's, Longcot Christmas Communion (by Extension)
10.30 St Mary's, Ashbury Family Communion
No service at Compton Beauchamp this morning

Sunday 1 January: New Year's Day

11.00 St Mary's, Ashbury Benefice Communion

**LONGCOT OCTAVES
800TH ANNIVERSARY
CHRISTMAS CONCERT**

ST MARY'S CHURCH LONGCOT
1216 AD - 2016 AD

WESSEX MALE CHOIR

ADULTS £8 (£10 AFTER 1ST DEC) - UNDER 18'S £5
CASH LICENSED BAR
TICKETS: WWW.LONGCOTVILLAGE.ORG

**FRIDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2016
6:30PM TO 8:30PM**

Country Matters

All our beef cattle are now housed and comfortable with a big heap of silage to keep them happy over the winter. In the fields it has been a lovely autumn here and the crops sown this autumn are showing nicely except for some weak areas planted to oil seed rape which have suffered from slugs and flea beetle attack. In some places to the north and east of us germination has been slow in more arid conditions.

All work and no play has never been my idea of fun so now is the time to find time for a hobby or two and mine, like countless before me, has centred round the country sports of shooting, hunting and sometimes horse racing.

The Old Berks Hunt held their opening meet on Baulking Green on November 5th with trails that led them to Wharf Rd, Longcot. I am told that there were five riders in need of medical attention that day as they joined the ranks of the redoubtable "tumblers club". For trails to be successful hounds need a good scent but this has always proved so mysterious and impossible to

predict. Moist conditions and colder weather certainly help and some hunters have told me that colder weather before snow in late afternoon will give just the right scenting. R.S. Surtees character Mr Jorrocks was always most optimistic... “ ‘unting was all that’s worth living for and all time is lost wot is not spent ‘unting”. Despite the 2005 ban and by living within the new rules the sport has never been more popular. One of the regrets of my life is that after an early car accident that made it painful to ride I have never been lucky enough or brave enough to hunt myself. Penny, my wife showed the way.

So for camaraderie and new country to explore I have had to go down another route and have indulged myself at this time of the year in the challenge of game shooting with friends. I started with an air gun, followed by a .410 folding “poachers” gun purchased from the poet John Betjeman from when he lived at Gerrards Farm, Uffington, then a 12 bore which I wore out and now shoot with a 16 bore. I am still trying to improve! Good scenting is equally important in the shooting field to help your dog pick up cleanly. It was very frustrating back in October when we could not find a number of partridges that had tucked into long, ungrazed downland pasture even though they were dead and had been quite well marked. I really think my black cocker, now four, would endorse those words of Mr Jorrocks and I feel sorry for her when the season closes for another year on February 1st .

Richard Green

Benefice Clergy

Vicar	Rev Richard Hancock	01793 780183
NSM	Revd Norma Fergusson (Except Monday and Friday)	01793 710055

Newsletter entries for January 2017 Submit your entries for January by **16th December** to: M. Turner Claremont, Ashbury SN6 8LN. marionturner@me.com
01793 710302

Website www.ashbury.org.uk